

## Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

There are so many excellent new albums around right now that, this week, I hardly know where to begin. We have house magnificence from **Demuja** and *Kann*, gorgeously deep ambiance from **Gas**, the leftfield techno brilliance of **Jon Hopkins**, **Forest Swords**, **Max Cooper** and **Aïsha Devi** and lots more. By **JOHN BITTLES**

So, tell your piggy bank to make peace with its maker, and let us begin...



**Jon Hopkins**, *Immunity* LP was close to ubiquitous in 2013, rightly appearing in most Best Of lists for that year. While the follow-up was a long time coming the good news is that it is every bit as good. Released at the start of May, *Singularity* contains the same mixture of techno crunch, ambient interludes and emotional resonance which Jon's long term fans have come to expect. The title track gets things off to a great start, stuttering beats joined by trance like synths on a song sure to have any self-respecting raver resembling one of Pavlov's dogs. Next, lead single *Emerald Rush* begins all soft and tranquil before bursting into life with some mind mangling bass stabs. Other picks include the epic trance groover *Neon Pattern Drum* which resembles the highlight of a **Paul Van Dyk** set, the melancholic clanks of *Everything Connected*, the tranquil piano refrain *Echo Dissolve* and the light and airy house strains of *Luminous Beings*. Full of peaks and troughs, *Singularity* gives the listener a proper journey filled with high drama and a sense of loss when it comes to an end. **9.5/10**.



When house music is done right it can be a truly wondrous thing. Case in point are the lush deep house grooves to be found on *Family Horror X Good Times*, the fantastic new compilation from Leipzig imprint *Kann*. Founded back in 2008 by **Sevensol**, **Map.ache** and **Bender**, *Kann* has firmly established itself as one of the best labels around. Now celebrating a decade in the game, *Family Horror X Good Times* is available as a three disc vinyl set or download from *Kann's* [Bandcamp page](#) and contains the

finest house music to grace these ears in a long time. Soft and succulent melodies merge with spiky 4/4 kicks, soulful samples, electro flourishes and more on an album which, even at 15 tracks (12 on the vinyl) leaves you begging for more. Picks include the acid laced melancholia of *Koburger Brücke* by **Eau Thermale**, the melodic breakbeats of **Sevensol & Bender's** *Malekula*, the technoid crunch of **Matt Karmil's** *Clean Bus* and the disco-tastic *Rätt Sida Om Cirkus* by **Art Alfie & Axel Boman**. Every track is a winner though, making *Family Horror X Good Times* a must for any dance music fan. **9.5/10**.



Next up we have some low BPM lushness with the highly anticipated return of **Wolfgang Voigt** under his revered alias **Gas**. Following last year's well-received *Narkopop* album, the techno don comes back to his spiritual home *Kompakt* with the atmospheric mood piece *Rausch*. Created to be listened to in one continuous 60+ minute journey, the record is a fully realised body of work where low-end bass pulses and dislocated rhythms merge with the soundtrack inspired ambiance for which **Gas** is best known. After the **Biosphere** style darkness of opener *Rausch 1*, a deep, foreboding bassline slowly but surely enters the fray on *Rausch 2*. The steady dub techno style deepness continues on album stand-out *Rausch 3*, before the beats fall away sharply on the glacial soundscapes of *Rausch 4*. Over the course of the rest of the LP echo drenched grooves mix with beatless atmospherics on an album which will leave any listener satisfied and eager for more. **9/10**.



**Demuja** is a fast rising producer who has been making waves recently with a string of releases which have featured some of the finest sample heavy house to have electrified a dance floor. This month he delivers his debut LP with the funk filled *Hidden Paradise*. Out soon on his own *MUJA* imprint, *Hidden Paradise* is a record which any self-respecting house-head needs to hear. *Work It* opens the record with a spoken work vocal, before a classic French touch groove bursts onto the scene to send shivers racing up and down the spine. Next, *How Do You Love* merges classic sounding disco strings with a soulful female vocal to form a song dying to make you move. Further in, the downbeat hip hop of *Things Look Like* makes for a

welcome change of pace, *You Smile Feat. Ainy* could be vintage **Masters At Work**, the lush hedonism of *Mr. Jazzy Wung* will have even the most reticent of dancers losing their cool, while the deep house strut of *See House* is simply divine. Do yourself a favour and put this on your shopping list today. **9/10**.



UK artist **Max Cooper** is one of those rare producers able to conjure a world of feeling with a minimum of fuss. Albums such as *Human* and *Emergence* successfully merged techno with classical and electronica to stunning effect, while the *Traum Collection* round up of highlights from his releases with revered Cologne label *Traum* will shatter unprepared minds. This May Max returns with a stellar contribution to *Balance Music's* long running mix series. *Balance 030* is a two hour journey into the heart of the electronic groove. Perfect for headphone listening, the album starts out with some deep, heady ambiance from **Bing And Ruth**, **Nils Frahm** and **Max Cooper** himself, before slowly but surely upping the pace. Slipping from deep house delights to mid-paced techno with ease, early highlights include **Dave DK's** excellent remix of *Straylight* by **Portable Sunsets**, **Lusine's** *Ticking Hands* and *A Ritmica* by **Donato Dozzy**. The second half of the mix merges instrumental hip hop with driving beats and emotional intensity to form a compelling set which should be considered a must listen for any electronic music fan. **8/5/10**.



The *Of Matter And Spirit* album from 2015 marked *Danse Noir* label head **Aïsha Devi** as a star of the electronica scene. This month she returns to the *Houndstooth* label with the broken techno and deconstructed pop of her new LP. *DNA Feelings* pushes its predecessor's expansive sound designs to awe-inspiring creative highs. The spectral ambiance of *DNA* opens proceedings in some style, Aïsha's own fractured voice cut up and rearranged to form the foundation of a song which reminds you of **Fever Ray** one minute, **Burial** the next. *Dislocation Of The Alpha* meanwhile utilizes chipmunk vocals, ghostly electronics and just a hint of sub bass to create a four minute experimental pop masterpiece. Also worth checking are the **Tricky** style paranoia of *Hyperlands*, the brutal beauty of *Inner State Of Alchemy* and the melancholy drenched soundscapes of closer *Cell Stems Spa*. While definitely not for beginners, the rich sonic

imagery of *DNA Feelings* means it is a record which will bewitch and enchant all enquiring minds. **8.5/10**.



This week we'll finish with the latest instalment of the highly regarded *DJ Kicks* series by *Ninja Tune* artist **Forest Swords**, who delivers a set filled with deep, hazy beats, smoky soulfulness and wilful eclecticism. Moving through genre and speed with ease, the mix finds **Neneh Cherry** sitting next to **Tokyo Prose & Fis** and **Dead Can Dance** without it sounding forced or contrived. After a spectral opening which features the ghostly ambiance of **David Toop**, **Kara-Lis Coverdale** and more, the mix gathers pace slightly with the lush dub techno groove of *Best Friend* by **Rhythm & Sound With Love Joy**. From here, **Axel Boman's** remix of *Gender* by **Skinnerbox** merges electronica with house to craft an emotive slice of dance floor joy. Other picks include the fractured dubstep of **Laurel Halo's** *Throw*, the funk filled bass pulse of *Showreel Pt. 2* by **Djrum**, and the classic beats and chimes of **Orbital's** *The Box (Part 1)*. With convention kicked to the kerb, **Forest Swords** has crafted a masterful mixture of leftfield oddities which constantly catches the listener by surprise. **8/10**.



A special mention must also go to: *Infernum* by **Fauna** - Messed-up rhythms merge with **Rana Farahani's** own treated vocals to form a record which is fresh, invigorating and fabulously strange, **9/10**, *Sparkle Hard* by **Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks** - Former **Pavement** legend **Stephen Malkmus** joins forces with **The Jicks** once again for an engaging record full of slacker cool, **8/10**, *Light is Liquid* by **Órvar Smárason** - The **múm** and **FM Belfast** member goes it alone this May with a heart-warming album of electronic pop which recalls the bittersweet melodies of **Pet Shop Boys** one minute, the glacial electronica of **Christian Löffler** the next, **8.5/10**, *Hundreds Of Days* by **Marry Lattimore** - Haunting and beautiful, the Los Angeles based harpist's new album has an impressively wistful air, **8.5/10**, *Chrome Sparks* by **Chrome Sparks** - On his debut LP **Jeremy Malvin** mixes house, beats, hip hop and more to create a funk filled sound collage, **8/10**, *The Horizon Just Laughed* by **Damien Jurado** - Sounding like the love child of

**Richard Hawley** and **Leon Bridges**, *The Horizon Just Laughed* is full of soul-infused indie pop, **8/10** and *Detroit Love Vol. 1 Mixed By Stacey Pullen* - **Carl Craig's** celebrated *Detroit Love* festival debuts a new mix series with techno legend **Stacey Pullen** blending 16 tough and funky gems, **8/10**.

Photo: Image Certified



And let's not forget: *Image Certifies* by **Ora Iso** □ Brooklyn duo **Kathleen Malay** and **Jason Kudo** make a glorious sounding racket full of scruffy electronics, scuzz-filled guitars and punkish vocals. In other words, it's fucking great, **8.5/10**, *Rebound* by **Eleanor Friedberger** □ The American artist's fourth album is full of melancholic electro pop gems which will have you dancing round your room one minute, crying into your Tetleys the next, **8/10**, *Medusa* by **L One** □ Fans of **DJ Cam** or early *Mo'Wax* are in for a treat with these sun-kissed beats, **8/10**, *Mocro* by **D□ Maroc** □ Dark, angry hip hop from Germany with stunning production and Zeitgeist rhymes, **8/10**, *Anticlones* by **Lucrecia Dalt** □ Ghostly electronica merges with clanking percussion and spoken word poetry on a strangely beguiling record which really does sound like nothing else around, **7.5/10**, *Zwischen* by **Jan Jelinek** □ An adaptation of a radio play which the electronica pioneer produced for German broadcaster *SWR2*, *Zwischen* is a strange, disorientating affair full of disembodied voices, atonal rhythms, bursts of static and hypnotic pulses, **7.5/10**, and *We We We* by **V/A** □ **Man Power's** *Me Me Me* imprint release a bumper 25 track compilation with all proceeds going to the *Help Refugees* charity. With artists such as **Medlar**, **Pional** and **Shit Robot** involved, head over to the [Bandcamp](#) page and get yourself a copy now, **8.5/10**.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)